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BRIEF NOTES ON JAPAN.—No. I.

BY THE REV. J. D. DAVIS, D.D. OF KIOTO.

THE COUNTRY.

THE empire consists of the four large islands of Yezo, Nippon, Shikoku, and Kiushiu, with between two and three thousand smaller inhabited islands. These islands stretch through about fifteen hundred miles from northwest to southeast, and are contained between about latitude 30 to 46 deg. north, and longitude 128 to 142 deg. east, from Greenwich. The total area of these islands is about one hundred and fifty thousand square miles, of which about one tenth is under cultivation.

Save the alluvial river plains in the valleys, and the delta and alluvial deposits around the coasts, Japan is all mountains and valleys. Its serrated peaks and ranges, its wooded valleys and picturesque waterfalls, its temple groves, shrine-crowned hills, and hamlet-dotted farms, make Japan one of the most beautiful lands that the sun shines upon.

About one tenth of the area of Japan, or about nine million acres, is under cultivation; this is about one fourth of the arable land; that is, of the land that *could* be cultivated, for much of that which is now under cultivation is formed of terraced hill and mountain sides. While the population, and acreage under cultivation, have increased, the product is said not to have increased during the last two hundred years.

PRODUCTIONS.

Rice is the staple product, all land which can be flooded during the summer being sown with rice, and in the fall wheat, barley, rapeseed, millet, and vegetables, are produced on this and other land. About one hundred and fifty million bushels of rice are produced each year, about fifty bushels to the acre. In ancient times one ninth of the produce of the land was given to the emperor. The land is all owned by the government, and is held in perpetual lease by the people. In the sixteenth century, the Tycoon Hideyoshi took two fifths of the product of the land; from 1604 to 1868, the Tokugawa dynasty of Tycoons took one half, and the owner of the land one fourth, leaving the tenant farmers only one fourth. This hard lot of the farmer is being improved a little, but only a little, as yet. Rice land is worth nearly five times as much as other arable land.

About eighty million pounds of tea are produced each year, of which fifty million pounds, and one million pounds of silk, are exported. The one million head of cattle in the empire make about three head to each hundred of the

population, while in the United States there are about seventy-five head to every hundred people. Until recently, cattle have not been used for food or milk, but now they are beginning to be used for beef. There are not far from two hundred varieties of fish eaten, nearly all being salt-water fish, one half of the people eating fish every day. The food of the masses is about ninety per cent. vegetable. About sixteen million bushels of sweet potatoes are produced annually.

THE PEOPLE.

The population by the last census is a little over thirty-six million. As to the origin of this people, there are two theories: First, that the Ainos, who inhabit the northern part of the northern Island of Yezo, came from Corea, and the conquering race of Japanese from the Malay Islands; second, that the Japanese came from Corea, and the Ainos were aborigines.

The people have been divided into four or five classes, though those class distinctions are now rapidly fading away: 1. The Samurai, or literary class, the old retainers of the daimios, numbering over two million. 2. The Agricultural class. 3. The Artisan class. 4. The Traders; making the Heimin, or common people, number about thirty-four million. According to the census of 1874 there were as follows:—

Princes of the blood	29	Buddhist nuns	9,621
Nobles, kuge, and ex-daimios	2,666	Farmers, adults	14,870,426
Retainers of the ex-daimios, 1st grade	1,282,167	Artisans, adults	701,416
Retainers of the ex-daimios, 2d grade	659,074	Merchants, adults	1,309,191
Buddhist priests	211,846	Miscellaneous occupations	2,129,522
		Yetas-pariahs	456,695
		Shinto priests	102,477

THE GOVERNMENT.

Personal rule of the mikados, or ancient feudalism with simple monarchy, existed from B. C. 660 to the eighth century; simple monarchy from the eighth to the twelfth century; and the dual system, with a complex feudal system, from the twelfth century to 1868. The dual system of government had its origin in this way: In A. D. 1142, the mikado gave his military power to one of his generals, and from that time for more than seven hundred years the tycoons exercised the power, while the mikado was shut up in his palace. The mikado was reinstated in 1868, after a bloody revolution of two years. He is an absolute sovereign, and administers affairs through a supreme council, which consists of the prime minister, the vice-prime minister, and the heads of the great departments of state, all of whom are appointed by the mikado. The heads of departments are as follows: Finance, Foreign Affairs, War, Marine, Educational, Public Works, Justice, Colonization, the Imperial Household, and the Interior. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, Japan was open to the scanty commerce of those early times, but in the sixteenth century it was sealed up and remained a closed empire for over two hundred years. This came about from the operations of the Roman Catholics.

EARLY HISTORY.

The mikado dates his dynasty in unbroken succession from B. C. 660, over twenty-five hundred years, and something like exact history begins from that time, although, as the first histories were not committed to writing until A. D. 712, much doubt encircles the history of the first part of this time. Letters, writing, and Buddhism, were introduced from Corea between A. D. 282 and A. D. 552. Buddhism was propagated from the sixth to the fifteenth century.

ROMAN CATHOLICS IN JAPAN.

The Jesuits entered Japan in 1549. Xavier reached Japan and visited Kioto, and within five years seven churches were established in and around the city, and many Christian communities had sprung up in the southwest. In 1581 there were two hundred churches and one hundred and fifty thousand Native Christians. Later there were two hundred thousand Catholic Christians in Japan. In the Island of Kiushiu, the daimios became Catholics and compelled their subjects to embrace the new faith. The people of whole districts of country were ordered to embrace Christianity or to leave their land and go into banishment. The Buddhist priests were exiled or killed; and fire and sword, as well as preaching, were employed as instruments of conversion. The Daimio of Bungo destroyed three thousand temples and monasteries. Portuguese slave traders sold thousands of Japanese as slaves in Macao, in China, and in the Philippine Islands. Nobunaga, the powerful Tycoon, favored the Jesuits, and burnt down over three thousand temples and monasteries in and around Kioto.

After Catholicism had flourished for forty years, the Tycoon Hideyoshi, in 1587, issued a decree of banishment against the missionaries. They still secreted themselves in large numbers, however, in the country, and in 1656 nine foreign priests and seventeen native converts were taken to Nagasaki and crucified. In 1611 the Tycoon Iyeyasu obtained proof of what he had long suspected, that the native converts and the missionaries had formed a plot to reduce Japan to the condition of a subject state. All foreign priests found in the country were ordered to be put to death, and Iyemitsu, the successor of Iyeyasu, shut foreign commerce up to Nagasaki, and forbade Japanese subjects leaving the country on pain of death. Fire and sword were used to extirpate Christianity. Many thousands were put to death; they were wrapped in straw sacks, piled up in heaps of wood, and burned. Mothers carried their babes in their bosoms, or their children in their arms, to the fire, the sword, or to the precipice's edge, rather than leave them behind to be educated in the pagan faith.

Finally, in 1637, about sixty thousand of the Christians rose, seized an old castle at Shimobari, near Nagasaki, fortified it, and at last, after a siege of two months, and great slaughter, they were only subdued with the aid of Dutch cannon from Nagasaki. Then the captives, to the number of nearly forty thousand, were put to death, and over the mound that covered their dead bodies was placed this inscription: "*So long as the sun shall warm the earth, let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan, and if the King of Spain himself, or the Christian's God, or the Great God of all, shall violate this command, he shall*

pay for it with his head." Edicts against Christianity were put up all over Japan; it was death to be a Christian. Five hundred dollars reward was offered for information of a priest, and \$300 for information of a native believer. Every house was required to have a heathen shrine in it, and the household was required to worship before that shrine, in the presence of an official, once each year. In many of the provinces, the people were compelled to trample on the crucifix yearly. No one could travel in Japan, unless he had a certificate that he was a member of some Buddhist sect.

As late as 1829, seven persons were crucified in Osaka, on suspicion that they were Christians. In 1869, about four thousand men, women, and children, from near Nagasaki, Catholic Christians, were seized, and scattered among the prisons of distant provinces. Before release came, four years afterward, more than half of them were dead. When, in 1870, the foreign ministers of the treaty powers went in a body to remonstrate with the Japanese Government against this treatment of these Christians, Mr. Iwakura, then Prime Minister, said to them that the Japanese Government would resist the incoming of Christianity as they would the inroad of an invading army. When the mikado was reinstated in 1868, he put up the following inscription on the bulletin-boards all over the empire: "The evil sect, called Christian, is strictly prohibited; suspicious persons must be reported, and rewards will be given."

JAPAN OPENED.

After Japan had been closed for just two hundred and twenty years, Commodore Perry, of the United States Navy, steamed into the bay of Yedo, July 7, 1853. The first treaty with the United States was signed, March 31, 1854. Townsend Harris' treaty was signed in August, 1858. Treaties with other powers followed and, as a result, five ports were opened to foreign residents and trade; namely: Yedo, with its port of Yokohama; Osaka, with its port of Kobe; Nagasaki, Niigata, on the west coast; and Hakodate, on the Island of Yezo. The mikado was restored to power, and the tycoon forever deposed from power, in 1868.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Letters from the Missions.

Maratha Mission.

ORDINATION AT AHMEDNAGAR.

MR. EDWARD S. HUME reports an important event in the history of the Ahmednagar Church. The ordination referred to took place August 24.

"Last December the church invited Mr. Tukaram Nathuji to preach for six months. The place which he has been

called to fill is an exceedingly difficult one, as Vishnupunt, the last pastor, was a rare man in almost every respect. Tukaramji carried himself so well for the six months during which he was on trial, that the church voted unanimously to ask him to become its permanent pastor. The council which was invited to ordain him was called according to the true Congregational method, and consisted of eleven members,

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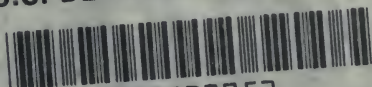
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